What is claimed is:

1. In a data processing device, a method supporting access to stored information, the method comprising:

receiving user-selected content data from a remote source over a network in response to a user initiated content data selection;

storing the user-selected content data in a storage location associated with the data processing device; and

enabling access to a first portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location for selective retrieval, while disabling access to a second portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location.

2. A method as in claim 1, wherein receiving user-selected content data from the remote source includes:

receiving a portion of user-selected content data from the remote source in response to a user retrieving previously stored user-selected content data from the storage location.

3. A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

providing notification to a user of only the portion of user-selected content data in the storage location that is available to the user for retrieval.

4. A method as in claim 1, wherein receiving user-selected content data from the remote source includes receiving the user-selected content data via use of a non-real-time data communication protocol, the method further comprising:

in response to receipt of a user playback command, transmitting a stream of data associated with the user-selected content data in the storage location to a playback device via use of a real-time data communication protocol.

5. A method as in claim 1, wherein receiving user-selected content data from the remote source includes receiving at least a portion of the user-selected content data via use of a non-real-time data communication protocol, the method further comprising:

in response to receipt of a user playback command, transmitting a data stream based on the user-selected content data stored in the storage location to a playback device via use of a real-time data communication protocol;

detecting that a contiguous portion of data associated with the data stream is not stored in the storage location; and

transmitting the contiguous portion of data associated with the data stream to the playback device via use of a real-time data communication protocol from the remote source instead of from the storage location in order to play back uninterrupted content data.

6. A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

generating a graphical user interface for displaying an itemized list of accessible user-selected content data in the storage location, the accessible user-selected content data being selectively retrieved by a user for playback in real-time;

receiving input from the user identifying a de-selected content item in the itemized list of available content data;

disabling user access to user-selected content data in the storage location associated with the de-selected content item; and

enabling user access to a different portion of user-selected content data in the storage location previously inaccessible to the user.

7. A method as in claim 6 further comprising:

receiving an indication that the user re-selects access to the de-selected content item in lieu of the different portion of user-selected content data in the storage location; and

enabling user access to the de-selected content item in lieu of the different portion of user-selected content data in the storage location.

8. A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

generating a graphical user interface for displaying an itemized list identifying locally available user-selected content data in the storage location accessible by a user for playback;

receiving a signal indicating that a first content data item identified in the itemized list of available user-selected content data has been retrieved by the user; and

deleting an entry corresponding to the first content data from the itemized list of available user-selected content after a configurable delay so that the user can no longer access the first content data.

9. A method as in claim 8 further comprising:

in response to making the first content data no longer available to the user, including an entry in the itemized list of available user-selected content data enabling access to second content data in the storage location previously inaccessible to the user.

10. A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving selection information from a user identifying particular content data for retrieval from the remote source; and

forwarding the selection information over the network to a request processor that collects requests for content data from multiple users, the request processor prompting distribution of content data from the remote source to the storage location accessible by the user.

11. A method as in claim 10 further comprising:

receiving input from the user specifying a time constraint for receiving the user–selected content data from the remote source for storage in the storage location; and

receiving the user-selected content data over the network for storage in the storage location depending on the specified time constraint.

12. A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

receiving input from the user specifying a bandwidth constraint for receiving user–selected content data over the network from the remote source for storage in the storage location; and

limiting a network bandwidth allocated for transmission of the user–selected content data from the remote source over the network depending on the specified bandwidth constraint.

13. A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

providing a time limit in which the user may selectively retrieve the user-selected content data from the storage location.

14. A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

partitioning a local data storage device associated with a user to include multiple storage slots for storing the first portion of user-selected content data accessible to the user for playback and at least one storage slot for storing the second portion of user-selected content data inaccessible to the user; and

based on a selection input from the user, enabling the user to access user-selected content data in the at least one slot storing the second portion of user-selected content data in lieu of enabling the user to access user-selected content data in at least one of the multiple storage slots storing the first portion of user-selected content data.

15. A method supporting distribution of data over a network, the method comprising:

receiving selection information over the network, the selection information identifying content data requested to be delivered to a storage device associated with a user generating the selection information; and

prompting a data server device to transmit at least a portion of user-selected content data identified in the selection information for storage in the storage device, wherein the user-selected content data stored in the storage device includes more user-selected content data than the user is enabled to selectively retrieve and play back on a playback device.

16. A method as in claim 15, wherein the selection information is generated by the user and wherein receiving selection information from the user includes:

receiving a prioritized list of preferred user-selected content data to be delivered for storage in the storage device associated with the user generating the selection information, the user-selected content data stored in the storage device being a subset of requested content data identified in the prioritized list.

17. A method as in claim 15 further comprising:

initially transmitting an amount of user-selected content data for storage in the storage device that the user is enabled to selectively play back; and

after detecting that at least a portion of the initially transmitted user-selected content data in the storage device has been played back by the user, prompting transmission of additional user-selected content data for storage in the storage device, the user being unable to play back the additional user-selected content data unless the user forgoes an ability to play back at least a portion of the initially transmitted user-selected content data.

18. A method as in claim 15 further comprising:

receiving schedule information from the user identifying a specified time for delivering the user-selected content data to the storage device;

transmitting the user-selected content data via a non-real-time data transmission protocol for storage of the content data in the storage device; and

enabling the user to selectively retrieve user-selected content data stored in the storage device via use of a real-time data communication protocol.

19. A data processing device providing access to stored data, the data processing device including:

a processor;

a memory unit that stores instructions associated with an application executed by the processor;

a communication interface that supports communication over a network; and

an interconnect coupling the processor, the memory unit, and the communication interface, enabling the processor to execute the application and perform operations of:

receiving user-selected content data from a remote source over the network in response to a user initiated content data selection;

storing the user-selected content data in a storage location associated with the data processing device; and

enabling access to a first portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location for selective retrieval, while disabling access to a second portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location.

20. A data processing device as in claim 19, wherein receiving user-selected content data from the remote source involves:

receiving a portion of user-selected content data from the remote source in response to a user retrieving previously stored user-selected content data from the storage location.

21. A data processing device as in claim 19 that additionally performs operations of:

providing notification to a user of only the portion of user-selected content data in the storage location that is available to the user for retrieval.

22. A data processing device as in claim 19, wherein receiving user-selected content data from the remote source involves receiving the user-selected content data via use of a non-real-time data communication protocol, the data processing device additionally performing operations of:

in response to receipt of a user playback command, transmitting a stream of data associated with the user-selected content data in the storage location to a playback device via use of a real-time data communication protocol.

23. A data processing device as in claim 19, wherein receiving user-selected content data from the remote source includes receiving at least a portion of the user-selected content data via use of a non-real-time data communication protocol, the data processing device additionally performing operations of:

in response to receipt of a user playback command, transmitting a data stream based on the user-selected content data stored in the storage location to a playback device via use of a real-time data communication protocol;

detecting that a contiguous portion of data associated with the data stream is not stored in the storage location; and

transmitting the contiguous portion of data associated with the data stream to the playback device via use of a real-time data communication protocol from the remote source instead of from the storage location in order to play back uninterrupted data on the playback device.

24. A data processing device as in claim 19 that additionally performs operations of:

generating a graphical user interface for displaying an itemized list of accessible user-selected content data in the storage location, the accessible user-

selected content data being selectively retrieved by a user for playback in real-time;

receiving input from the user identifying a de-selected content item in the itemized list of available content data;

disabling user access to user-selected content data in the storage location associated with the de-selected content item; and

enabling user access to a different portion of user-selected content data in the storage location previously inaccessible to the user.

25. A data processing device as in claim 24 that additionally performs operations of:

receiving an indication that the user re-selects access to the de-selected content item in lieu of the different portion of user-selected content data in the storage location; and

enabling user access to the de-selected content item in lieu of the different portion of user-selected content data in the storage location.

26. A data processing device as in claim 19 that additionally performs operations of:

generating a graphical user interface for displaying an itemized list identifying locally available user-selected content data in the storage location accessible by a user for playback;

receiving a signal indicating that a first content data item identified in the itemized list of available user-selected content data has been retrieved by the user; and

deleting an entry corresponding to the first content data from the itemized list of available user-selected content so that the user can no longer access the first content data.

27. A data processing device as in claim 26 that additionally performs an operation of:

in response to making the first content data no longer available to the user, including an entry in the itemized list of available user-selected content data enabling access to second content data in the storage location previously inaccessible to the user.

28. A data processing device as in claim 19 that additionally performs operations of:

receiving selection information from a user identifying particular content data for retrieval from the remote source; and

forwarding the selection information over the network to a request processor that collects requests for content data from multiple users, the request processor prompting distribution of content data from the remote source to the storage location accessible by the user.

29. A data processing device as in claim 28 that additionally performs operations of:

receiving input from the user specifying a time constraint for receiving user–selected content data from the remote source for storage in the storage location; and

enabling user access to content data in the storage location depending on the specified time for receiving the user-selected content data.

30. A data processing device as in claim 19 that additionally performs operations of:

receiving input from the user specifying a bandwidth constraint for receiving user–selected content data over the network from the remote source for storage in the storage location; and

limiting a network bandwidth allocated for transmission of the user–selected content data from the remote source over the network depending on the specified bandwidth constraint for receiving the user-selected content data.

31. A data processing device as in claim 19 that additionally performs an operation of:

providing a time limit in which the user may selectively retrieve user selected content data from the storage location.

32. A data processing device as in claim 19 that additionally performs operations of:

partitioning a local data storage device associated with a user to include multiple storage slots for storing the first portion of user-selected content data accessible to the user for playback and at least one storage slot for storing the second portion of user-selected content data inaccessible to the user, each storage slot being used to at least partially store content data; and

based on a selection input from the user, enabling the user to access user-selected content data in the at least one slot storing the second portion of user-selected content data in lieu of enabling the user to access user-selected content data in at least one of the multiple storage slots storing the first portion of user-selected content data.

33. A request processing device comprising:

a processor;

a memory unit that stores instructions associated with an application executed by the processor;

a communication interface that supports communication over a network; and

an interconnect coupling the processor, the memory unit, and the communication interface, enabling the processor to execute the application and perform operations of:

receiving selection information over the network, the selection information identifying content data requested to be delivered to a storage device associated with a user generating the selection information; and

prompting a data server device to transmit at least a portion of user-selected content data identified in the selection information for storage in the storage device, wherein the user-selected content data stored

in the storage device includes more user-selected content data than the user is enabled to selectively retrieve and play back.

34. A request processing device as in claim 33, wherein the selection information is generated by the user and wherein receiving selection information from the user includes:

receiving a prioritized list of preferred user-selected content data to be delivered for storage in the storage device associated with the user generating the selection information, the user-selected content data stored in the storage device being a subset of requested content data identified in the prioritized list.

35. A request processing device as in claim 33 further comprising:

initially transmitting an amount of user-selected content data for storage in the storage device that the user is enabled to selectively play back; and

after detecting that at least a portion of the initially transmitted user-selected content data in the storage device has been played back by the user, prompting transmission of additional user-selected content data for storage in the storage device, the user being unable to play back the additional user-selected content data unless the user forgoes the ability to play back at least a portion of the initially transmitted user-selected content data.

36. A request processing device as in claim 33 further comprising:

receiving schedule information from the user identifying a specified time for delivering the user-selected content data to the storage device;

transmitting the user-selected content data via a non-real-time data transmission protocol for storage of the content data in the storage device; and

enabling the user to selectively retrieve user-selected content data stored in the storage device via use of a real-time data communication protocol.

37. A data processing device supporting access to stored information, the data processing device comprising:

means for receiving user-selected content data from a remote source over a network in response to a user initiated content data selection;

means for storing the content data in a storage location associated with the data processing device; and

means for enabling access to a first portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location for selective retrieval, while disabling access to a second portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location.

38. A computer program product including a computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon for processing data information, such that the instructions, when carried out by a processing device, enable the processing device to perform the steps of:

receiving user-selected content data from a remote source over a network in response to a user initiated content data selection;

storing the content data in a storage location associated with the data processing device; and

enabling access to a first portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location for selective retrieval, while disabling access to a second portion of the received user-selected content data in the storage location.